

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. **(currently amended)** A disposable diaper having a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending between said front and rear waist regions, said diaper comprising:

a liquid-absorbent core having an upper surface facing a wearer's skin and a lower surface facing away from the wearer's skin and extending over said crotch region and further into said front and rear waist regions;

a liquid-pervious first sheet having an upper section covering said upper surface of said core and a lower section covering said lower surface of said core; and

[[and]] a liquid-impervious second sheet lying outside said lower section of said first sheet; said upper section of said first sheet extending upwardly, in a vicinity of a longitudinal center line bisecting a transverse dimension of said diaper, from said upper surface of said core so as to define a tubular liquid passage extending in [[the]] a longitudinal direction along said longitudinal center line; and

said tubular liquid passage extending at least from said front waist region toward said crotch region.

2. **(currently amended)** The diaper according to ~~Claim 1~~ claim 1, wherein:
a slit formed completely through said core in a thickness direction thereof along said longitudinal center line extends in [[a]] the longitudinal direction at least from said front waist region toward said crotch region; and

said lower section of said first sheet extends upward from said lower surface of said core through said slit so as to be exposed above said slit, generally describing a loop and cooperates with said upper section to define said tubular liquid passage.

3. **(currently amended)** The diaper according to ~~Claim 1~~ claim 1, wherein said first sheet is formed from a hydrophilic fibrous nonwoven fabric and said upper section defining said tubular liquid passage has a fiber density higher than a fiber density in a subsection of said upper section except said tubular liquid passage.

4. **(currently amended)** The diaper according to ~~Claim 3~~ claim 2, wherein said lower section defining said tubular liquid passage has a fiber density higher than a fiber density in a subsection of said lower section except said tubular liquid passage.

5. **(new)** The diaper according to claim 1, wherein the upper section of said first sheet describes a shape of Ω .

6. **(new)** The diaper according to claim 2, wherein the lower section of said first sheet describes a shape of Ω .

7. **(new)** The diaper according to claim 3, wherein the tubular liquid passage is configured to provide a capillary effect in the longitudinal direction, so that bodily liquid discharged on the tubular liquid passage spreads in the longitudinal direction before spreading in a transverse direction perpendicular to the longitudinal direction.

8. **(new)** The diaper according to claim 1, wherein the tubular liquid passage extends, in said longitudinal direction, over an entire length of said absorbent core.

9. (new) The diaper according to claim 2, wherein the slit and the tubular liquid passage extend, in said longitudinal direction, over an entire length of said absorbent core.

10. (new) The diaper according to claim 2, wherein the lower section of said first sheet is joined to itself in the longitudinal direction to define said loop.

11. (new) A disposable diaper having a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending in a longitudinal direction of said diaper between said front and rear waist regions, said diaper comprising:

a liquid-absorbent core having an upper surface facing a wearer's skin and a lower surface facing away from the wearer's skin, said core extending in the longitudinal direction from said front waist region to said rear waist region via said crotch region;

an upper liquid-pervious sheet section covering at least said upper surface of said core; and

a lower liquid-impervious sheet disposed below said lower surface of said core;

said upper liquid-pervious sheet section comprising an upwardly convex portion which is located in a vicinity of a longitudinal center line bisecting a transverse dimension of said diaper and upwardly spaced from the upper surface of said core so as to define a passage between said upwardly convex portion and the upper surface of said core.

12. (new) The diaper according to claim 11, further comprising

a slit extending completely through an entire thickness of said core; and

a lower liquid-pervious sheet section extending from below said lower surface of said core, upwardly, through said slit and defining another upwardly convex portion which is located above the upper surface of the core and below the upwardly convex portion of said upper liquid-pervious sheet section and defines together with said upwardly convex portion of said upper liquid-pervious sheet section a double wall of said passage.

13. (new) The diaper according to claim 11, wherein

said upper liquid-pervious sheet section further comprises transversely lateral portions respectively covering transversely lateral regions of the upper surface of said core and being continuous to and connected with each other by said upwardly convex portion, and

a fiber density of said upper liquid-pervious sheet section in said upwardly convex portion is higher than in said transversely lateral portions so that said passage provides a capillary effect in the longitudinal direction, whereby bodily liquid discharged on the passage spreads in the longitudinal direction before spreading in a transverse direction perpendicular to the longitudinal direction.

14. (new) The diaper according to claim 12, wherein

said lower liquid-pervious sheet section further comprises transversely lateral portions respectively covering transversely lateral regions of the lower surface of said core, being positioned between the lower surface of said core and the liquid-impervious sheet, and being continuous to and connected with each other by said another upwardly convex portion, and

a fiber density of said lower liquid-pervious sheet section in said another upwardly convex portion is higher than in said transversely lateral portions so that said passage provides a capillary effect in the longitudinal direction, whereby bodily liquid discharged on the passage spreads in the longitudinal direction before spreading in a transverse direction perpendicular to the longitudinal direction.

15. (new) The diaper according to claim 13, wherein the upwardly convex portion and said transversely lateral portions of said upper liquid-pervious sheet section together describe a shape of Ω .

16. (new) The diaper according to claim 14, wherein said another upwardly convex portion and said transversely lateral portions of said lower liquid-pervious sheet section together

describe a shape of Ω .

17. **(new)** The diaper according to claim 11, wherein the passage is tubular and extends longitudinally along said longitudinal center line at least from said front waist region toward said crotch region.

18. **(new)** The diaper according to claim 11, wherein the passage extends, in said longitudinal direction, over an entire length of said absorbent core.

19. **(new)** The diaper according to claim 12, wherein the slit and the tubular liquid passage extend, in said longitudinal direction, over an entire length of said absorbent core.

20. **(new)** The diaper according to claim 12, wherein said another upwardly convex portion of said lower liquid-pervious sheet section is joined to itself in the longitudinal direction to define a tubular shape of said passage.